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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 THE HAGUE 000976

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DEPT FOR EUR/ERA (P. CHASE)

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [EU](#) [BU](#) [CY](#) [RO](#) [TU](#) [NL](#)
SUBJECT: NETHERLANDS/EU: SUPPORT FOR ENLARGEMENT CANDIDATES
WANING

REF: A. A) THE HAGUE 606

[1](#)B. B) SOFIA 489 (EXDIS)

Classified By: Political Counselor Andrew J. Schofer; reasons 1.4 (b) a
nd (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: The Netherlands appears likely to follow the European Commission's recommendation, due this month, on Bulgarian EU accession. The GONL is ambivalent on the date for Romania - 2007 or 2008 - and is not making any bets on whether Turkey will ever make it into the Union. The GONL believes it has British, French and German support for the general proposition that future EU candidates should be required to address the toughest political issues, particularly in the areas of Justice and Home Affairs, up front. Finally, say the Dutch, the political mood in The Netherlands is such that the GONL is unlikely to support calls for further expansion for some years. End summary.

Bulgarian accession: GONL likely to follow EC recommendation

[1](#)2. (C) Poloff met April 26 with Stefan van Wersch, MFA,s European Union External Policy Division Head, and policy officer adine van Loon. Van Wersch agreed that a European Commission recommendation that Bulgaria join the EU in 2007, with safeguards, would be in the best interests of The Netherlands. He recognized that the other options currently being discussed in Brussels - a later accession date or a delayed decision - could create a nationalist backlash that could be harmful to Dutch and EU interests. He would not, however, say whether he believed the GONL would follow the EC's lead.

GONL: Toughest reforms should come first for future candidates

[1](#)3. (C) Van Wersch noted the remarkable progress Romania has made in the past 14 months. Romanian Prime Minister Popescu-Tariceanu's determined efforts to stamp out corruption, tackle environmental problems and address other economic and political criteria had come as a welcome surprise. By contrast, Bulgaria's abysmal performance during the same period was much worse than expected. Now, said van Wersch, the EU found itself in the unpleasant position of having to make accession decisions based on political calculations rather than on the specific criteria agreed to in the accession negotiations.

[1](#)4. (C) Van Wersch confirmed reports that the Dutch would push for an EU accession policy requiring future candidates - those not currently promised accession - to fulfill the tougher political criteria up front. In particular, Justice and Home Affairs would have to be dealt with earlier. He noted that the proposals are not revolutionary, and added that the GONL believes it has a measure of support from the French, British and Germans.

GONL: No more accession rounds, for now

[1](#)5. (C) According to van Wersch, the Netherlands does not anticipate any additional accession rounds for some years. The population is worn out, he said. He believed the Dutch parliament remained committed to keeping its word to those nations already promised future accession. However, political developments could always call even that into question.

GONL on Turkey: The jury is out until 2007

[1](#)6. (C) On Turkish accession, he said, the GONL must wait to see the results of Turkey's 2007 elections. That would determine eventual success in meeting the accession criteria. While declining to speculate on the eventual outcome of Turkey's bid, he noted that the GONL remained opposed to the French proposal of tying further movement on the Aquise progress on Copenhagen criteria. He echoed recent statements by Dutch State Secretary Atzo Nicolai, noting that

The Netherlands remains, in principle, receptive to Turkish accession. The Austrians, he added, are in their own world.

17. (C) The Dutch would prefer to have more intensive communication with the Turks and have, for this reason, proposed quarterly meetings with the Turks to discuss problem areas (ref A). Turkish Undersecretary for European Affairs Ahmet Acet was in The Hague April 25, to discuss this with his Dutch counterparts.

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18. (C) Finally, van Wersch clarified State Secretary Atzo Nicolai, widely reported remarks, made during a mid April trip to the Balkans, that "the boundaries of Europe are drawn." Nicolai was, said van Wersch, off the reservation. Foreign Minister Bot subsequently explained to Parliament that the Netherlands will abide by established EU criteria for consideration of requests for accession.

Comment: Support for current candidates suffering

19. (C) Comment: The Dutch political establishment is reacting to the widespread public sentiment that the EU has expanded too rapidly. While the negative mood will, in all likelihood, eventually pass, support for the accession of current candidate countries is suffering. We will continue to press the GONL at all levels to help maintain momentum.
ARNALL